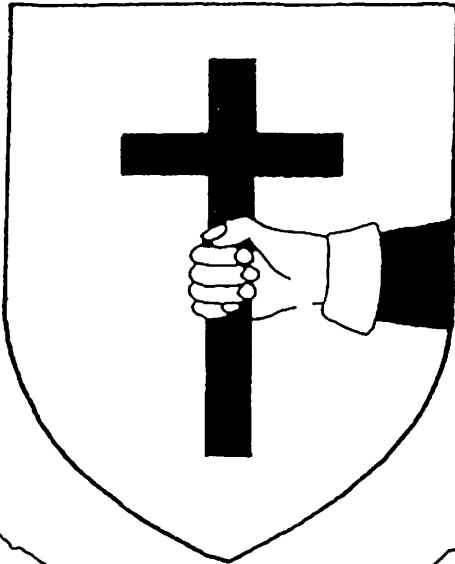
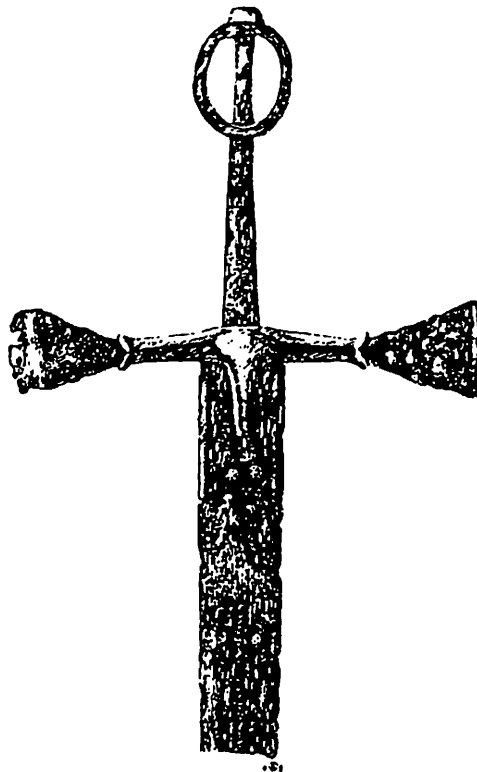


Ó Domhnaill Abú



*O'Donnell Clan
Newsletter No. 17*

Winter 1991



Sixteenth Century Irish sword, showing open Pommel.

"On the evening of the 16th of August, 1617, two Irish Franciscans were seated in the library of the house which they occupied at Louvain as a temporary domicile for themselves and community, pending the erection of the convent of St. Anthony, the first stone of which had been laid a few months before by Albert and Isabella, joint sovereigns of the Netherlands". They were Fr. Donagh Mooney who had spent years compiling the history of the Irish Franciscans, and Fr. Purcell who had done the latin translation. Their eyes pored "over the pages which Fr. Purcell had just then completed; and no sooner did Mooney's clear grey eye light on the word 'Donegal,' than the tears streamed hot and fast down his channelled cheeks, and then, after a moment's pause, he turned to his companion, and said:- "Dear brother, read for me the history of that monastery I loved so well - aye, and that I love still, though it is now a lonely, rifted ruin.""

Fr. Purcell began:-

"It was the year 1474, when the Franciscans were holding a provincial chapter in the monastery of Ross Rial, that Nuala O'Connor, daughter of O'Connor Faile, one of the most powerful of the Leinster princes, and wife of Hugh Roe O'Donnell, came, accompanied by a brilliant following of noble ladies, and a goodly escort of kerne and galloglass, to present an humble memorial to the assembled fathers. When the latter had duly considered the prayer of the Lady Nuala's memorial, they deputed the provincial to inform her that they could not comply with her request at that moment, but that at some future time they would cheerfully send a colony of Franciscans to the principality of Tirconnell. "What!" replied the princess, sorely pained by the refusal. "I have journeyed a hundred miles to attain the object that has long been dearest to my heart, and will you now venture to deny my prayer? If you do, beware of God's wrath; for I will appeal to his throne, and charge you with the loss of all souls which your reluctance may cause to perish in the territory of Tirconnell!" Earnest and energetic was the lady's pleading; so much so, that she ultimately overcame the hesitation of the friars, some of whom professed themselves ready to

accompany her to Tirconnell. Proud of her success, the Lady Nuala then set out on her journey homewards, followed by a goodly number of Franciscans, who, when they arrived in the barony of Tir-Hugh, immediately commenced building the far-famed monastery at the head of the lovely bay of Donegal."

Thus began the glorious Franciscan association with Tyrconnell and the O'Donnells. There is a difference of opinion regarding the Lady Nuala who extended the invitation to the Friars, indeed two Lady Nualas are mentioned in connection with the coming of the Franciscans to Donegal, Nuala O'Connor and Nuala O'Brien, but whether they were successive wives of one O'Donnell or wives of two successive O'Donnells is not clear. It is known that the first Red Hugh married twice and the Friary was established during his time.

"The wonderful generosity of the O'Donnells assured that the Friary lacked nothing that was necessary at the liturgical functions and for the household needs. In 1497 a band of sixteen friars took over Carrickfergus Friary from the Conventuals "by the authority of the Pope and at the request of Niall O'Neill." Early in the sixteenth century the Friary of Dromahaire was founded by friars from Donegal. These new foundations prove that the Donegal Friary was in flourishing condition. During the chieftaincy of Red Hugh there was great peace and prosperity and the friars lived prayerfully and unmolested".

"When the Pope excommunicated Queen Elizabeth I for her actions against the Catholic Church, the Franciscans in Ireland openly opposed her devilish scheme to stamp out the True Faith in Ireland. Donegal Friary, hitherto at peace, became the object of British suspicion. In 1588 an English army pillaged the Friary, killing the Guardian, Fr. Tadhg O'Boyle and desecrated the holy place. Soon afterwards a band of English soldiers garrisoned the Friary and destroyed the statues and holy pictures".

With the return of Red Hugh (the second Red Hugh) in 1592, the friars once again lived in peace and security but not for long. In 1601, while Red Hugh was campaigning in Connaght, his own cousin and brother-in-law, Niall Garbh,

encouraged by the English, occupied the Friary intending to bombard the castle from there. Niall Garbh was disappointed to find that the friars had already fled taking their valuables with them. On Saturday morning, Sept. 20th 1601 Niall's gunpowder exploded killing many of the soldiers and causing a fire which destroyed most of the building.

The friars, while 'on their keep' among the neighbouring hills, ministered as best they could to the needs of the people. After Rory signed the treaty in 1604 he set about repairing the Friary but the 'Flight of the Earls' in 1607 vanquished all hopes of re-establishing a Franciscan friary at Donegal. The Friary was then allotted as the temporary residence of the Protestant Bishop of Raphoe.

For the next two centuries the Franciscans suffered great persecution in defence of the Faith. Eventually it became impossible for them to live as a community. Some became Parish Priests while two, Bonaventure Daniel Gallagher and Anthony O'Donnell, became Bishops of Raphoe. Finally in 1873 the Donegal Friary, canonically at least, was dissolved.

But in the summer of 1946 the Franciscan Friars returned when they acquired a temporary dwelling in Rossnowlagh. In 1952 the present Friary was opened where the community has thrived since.

The O'Donnell Franciscan associations are many. We are told that the Donegal community was richly endowed by the first Red Hugh who gave them chalices, vestments, furniture and other requirments. (Of all the altar plate belonging to the Friary only one piece, the 'Maguire Chalice', now in Canada is known to have survived to the present.) They had a fishing weir near the Friary which supplied them with fish especially during Lent. The Friary was used for important political and ecclesiastical meetings of the time. It was from here that the friars went to establish Crevelea Abbey where Hugh of Larkfield is buried (see ODA No. 15).

For a century and a quarter the friars lived happily as Tyrconnell, being quite powerful, enjoyed peace and prosperity. Foreign ships called at Killybegs and Donegal to exchange salt, iron, guns, gunpowder, silks, wine etc. for fish, rugs, hides, etc. (O'Donnell was known on the Continent as the 'King of Fishes').

O'Donnell chieftains dressed, according to one report, 'in fine costumes of silk and satin and crimson velvet with aiguillettes of gold'. According to the 'Four Masters' the "doors of Tyrconnell needed to be closed only against the wind", they feared no other enemy.

The Friary was also the burial place for the O'Donnell chieftains and their families. Indeed, as already mentioned in the case of Hugh of Larkfield, O'Donnells of the mainline were buried in Franciscan houses in other countries as well, e.g. Red Hugh in Valladolid, Spain; Rory and Caffir in San Pietro de Montorio, Rome; and Hugh son of Caffir in St. Anthony's, Louvain. The following are buried in Donegal - the first Red Hugh d. 1505; Art O'Donnell, his nephew who died suddenly within the grounds of the Friary 1512; Aodh Dubh, son of Red Hugh, who died in the Friary 1537; Rory, grandson of Red Hugh, Franciscan Bishop of Derry, died 1550; Manus O'Donnell, chieftain and grandson of Red Hugh, d. 1563 in his castle at Lifford (see ODA No.6); Maeve O'Donnell, dau. of Red Hugh, died 1577; Caffir, son of Manus, died Scariffhollis 1580; Manus, brother of the second Red Hugh, mortally wounded in battle near Lifford and died a week later in 1600; Aodh Dubh, chieftain and father of the second Red Hugh, d. 1600.

"On Donegal's sea-rifted headlands,
High over the desolate sands,
The pile built by princely O'Donnells
In shattered magnificence stands.
Fire, tempest, the stout walls have blackened;
The wind through its aisles chants a tune;
And in, through the tall chancel window,
At midnight, comes gleams of the moon.

Ah! father, I fondly remember
The days when the chancel was thronged
With the kernes and the wives of Tyrconnell-
Ere yet the Franciscans were wronged.
When torches blazed red round the altar,
The roofs echoed back the loud strain
Of voices grown shrill on the highlands,
Or deep, on the thunderous main".

.....
Sources:
The Franciscans at Rossnowlagh by Fr. Simon O'Byrne, O.F.M. (1960)
The Franciscan Monasteries and The Irish Hierarchy in the 17th. Century. by Rev. C.P.Meehan. (1877).
Franciscan Donegal by Fr. Terence O'Donnell, O.F.M. (1952).
The Irish Franciscan's Poetry by J.F.

Pat O'Donnell was born in the Gweedore area of Co. Donegal in 1838 but as a young man emigrated to the U.S.A. in search of employment like so many of his countrymen. He worked for a while as a butler in Brooklyn and Philadelphia, but later as a miner in Ohio, Toronto, Montana and Nevada.

On the 19th of May 1883 he departed from New York to visit his home in Ireland with the intention of going from there to South Africa to seek his fortune in the silver mines; the gold and silver mines of California and Nevada having by now declined.

In May 1882 an incident occurred in the Phoenix Park, Dublin which was to have far-reaching effects and bring about the death on the gallows of Patrick O'Donnell. Two government officials, Lord Frederick Cavendish, Chief Secretary and Mr. Burke, the Under Secretary while walking in the Park were attacked by four men and mortally wounded.

In Jan. 1883 twelve men belonging to a secret organisation known as the 'Invincibles' were arrested for conspiring to kill members of the Government but lack of evidence was making it difficult to have convictions made. Then, one of them, James Carey gave King's evidence against his comrades resulting in five of them being hanged in May of that year. The other prisoners received terms of penal servitude and imprisonment.

After this incident Carey chose to emigrate to Natal in Africa where he felt life would be safer. Disguised and using a false name, he was conveyed to England under heavy guard and on the 6th July the entire family, using the surname 'Power', boarded a ship at Dartmouth bound for Natal.

And so it happened that O'Donnell and Carey ended up on board the same ship bound for South Africa. As there were very few Irish on board it was natural that they became acquainted and spent quite a lot of time chatting and having the odd drink together. During a stop at Capetown, 27th July, Carey's true identity was revealed to O'Donnell. Patrick had already, during this stop, extended his passage to Natal.

By Sunday 29th it was common knowledge aboard the 'Melrose' that Mr. Power was really James Carey the Irish arch-traitor. He was being avoided by



the other passengers including O'Donnell. Carey appeared quite nervous and was drinking a lot. Late that evening both met in the 'Saloon' where a heated argument developed. What happened next has been the cause of much speculation but it seems both produced pistols. (Patrick, it is said, often carried a gun, a habit he acquired west of the Rockies). O'Donnell was first to shoot, hitting Carey in the neck; Carey's pistol fell to the floor. As Carey made a dive for it two more bullets from O'Donnell's gun stopped him. James Carey was dead. Patrick was, immediately, placed under arrest, and after a preliminary investigation at Port Elizabeth, was removed to London for trial.

On the 31st Nov. 1883 Patrick O'Donnell took his place in the dock at the Old Bailey, London where he was ably defended by Messrs. Charles Russell, Q.C. and A.M. Sullivan, Q.C. assisted by General Pryor, an eminent American lawyer sent by the Irish in the U.S. But, of course, the result was a foregone conclusion. After a trial that lasted two days, O'Donnell was found guilty of murder. As he was being removed from the court he shouted, "Three cheers for Ireland! Good-bye the United States! It is a plot by perjurers to destroy me!"

He had been accused of being a special agent sent from America to assassinate Carey and, indeed, some circumstantial evidence supported this claim. Patrick;

however, swore to the end that he acted in self-defence but he lacked witnesses.

On the 17th Dec. at 8 a.m. he was led to his execution at Newgate Prison, fortified by the rites of the Catholic Church. Eyewitnesses record that the prisoner mounted the scaffold with a firm step, smiled and passed into eternity without showing the least sign of fear.

"In Newgate's dreary prison

They dug a narrow grave

And in it sleeps O'Donnell

The bravest of the brave".

Yes, Pat O'Donnell is well remembered in song and story. A Celtic cross perpetuating his memory stands in Derrybeg (Gweedore) while a magnificent marble monument in Glasnevin Cemetery, Dublin bears the following inscription:-

Sources:

Donegal Annual 1960, Dalach Ghaioth Dobhair le Niall O'Donnell.
History of Landlordism in Donegal by Proinnsias O'Gallchobhair.
Scathlann, uimh. 2(Iris Chumann Staire agus Seanchais Ghaioth Dobhair).

Don O'Donnell to Cycle in Ireland.

"Don O'Donnell, the tireless Wootton Bassett campaigner for needy children, is to have a wing named after him in a new children's shelter in India.

Last year, Don, of Station Road, raised over £8,000 in a sponsored cycle ride towards the Madras project. He is one of the Wiltshire Friends of the International Boys Town Trust, soon to be renamed the International Children's Trust.

The Trust helps children in Mexico, the Philippines and Sri Lanka, as well as in Madras.

Don's contribution, and the proceeds of numerous fund-raising events by the Wiltshire Friends, resulted in the recent presentation of £17,475 to trust director Richard Gardener, who said there will be a Wiltshire Room in the O'Donnell Wing."

The above is from a clipping from the Wiltshire Gazette & Herald, 22nd August 1991, sent to me by Don himself. Now, Don has his eyes set on Ireland as the venue of his next long-distance cycle. In Sept. '92 he plans to pedal from Mizen(in Cork) to Malin(in Donegal) to raise more funds for charity.

IN MEMORY

of

PATRICK O'DONNELL

who heroically gave up his life
for IRELAND

In London, England on

17th December 1883.

Not tears but prayers for the dead
who died for Ireland.

This monument was erected

by the grateful admirers

of his heroism

In the United States of America

Through the 'Irish World'

and forwarded

By a ladies committee of New York.

Mrs. Maggie Halvey, Mrs. F. Byrne,

Ellen Forde.

Afterwards, he says, he hopes to ride to Burtonport(N.W. Donegal) to visit his former home. His schedule will be 100 miles a day - not bad going at 60 years of age. We wish him all the best and I look forward to seeing you Don when you get to Donegal.

V. O'D.

The World Book of O'Donnells.

By now, many of you, I am sure have received a letter from a certain Margaret O'Donnell in Ohio telling you all about the 'O'Donnell 1991 International Registry' she is promoting through Halbert's of Dublin. It appears to me to be a list of names and addresses taken from some computer listing such as telephone directories, along with some history, but I haven't seen it yet. I have ordered a copy and will give my comments in the next issue.

It is strange that my friend John Gallagher showed me an identical letter he received today from a certain Gallagher person also living in Ohio and promoting the exact same(only for Gallaghers) through Halbert's of Dublin. Both his and my letter were mailed in the Dominican Republic.

V.O'D.

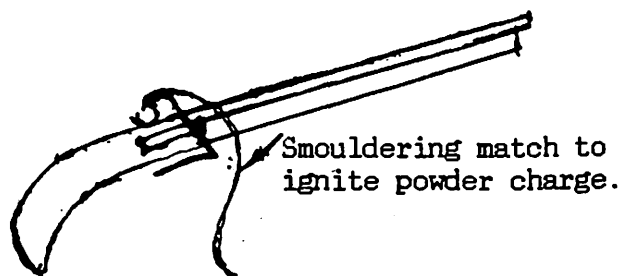
The traditional arms of the Irish forces at the time of the Nine years War were in the main the weapons of two classes of soldier, i.e., the lightly armed kerne and the heavily armed Gallowglass. Many contemporary accounts describe the Irish soldier of that time as being extremely tough and of great endurance, able to cover great distances quickly and with an infinite capacity for living off the land. His food varied according to the locality or the circumstances in which he found himself, corn meal, butter, parsnips, beef, mutton, venison and horse-flesh are mentioned from time to time; uisce beatha, according to O'Clery, always took a prominent place in the feasting.

The defensive equipment of the kerne was a small round shield or targe of yew wood, covered with bull's hide, and a helmet covering the head and part of the face. Their offensive weapons were two or three javelins and for close quarter work the scian(dirk) or sword. Judging by contemporary illustrations and from a sword in the arms collection of the National Museum this was a type apparently peculiar to Ireland at this time. The blade was approximately 33" long with a simple crossguard or quillions terminating in flattened fan-shaped projections (see cover). These swords had not reached the advanced stage of development of their English or Spanish counterparts.

The Irish used the javelin both on foot and 'in the saddle and many accounts testify to their skill and expertness in their use.

This was practically a transition period in Irish armies of the time. The Gallowglasses were becoming pikemen, and the kerne were being trained as musketeers. References to the use of pikemen on the Irish side are common in accounts of the Nine Years War. Whether the Gallowglass used a pike or an axe their traditional defensive armour was a three quarter length tunic of chain mail, with helmet and sometimes a hauberk and metal gauntlets. The firearms on both sides were matchlock muskets, known as the caliver and the arquebus.

The caliver was the heavier weapon with a greater range than the arquebus and fired a lead ball of 20 mm. diameter. Part of the equipment for the caliver was a forked stand which the musketeer



Arquebus with drooped stock for firing from chest.

fixed in the ground to rest the barrel and steady his aim. The arquebus was a shorter weapon with a stock similar in shape to the curved end of a hurley or hockey stick. The arquebus had a shorter range than the caliver and was fired from the chest and discharged a ball of 15 mm. dia. Both were matchlocks, which required a piece of burning tow to be applied to a touch hole to set off the powder charge.

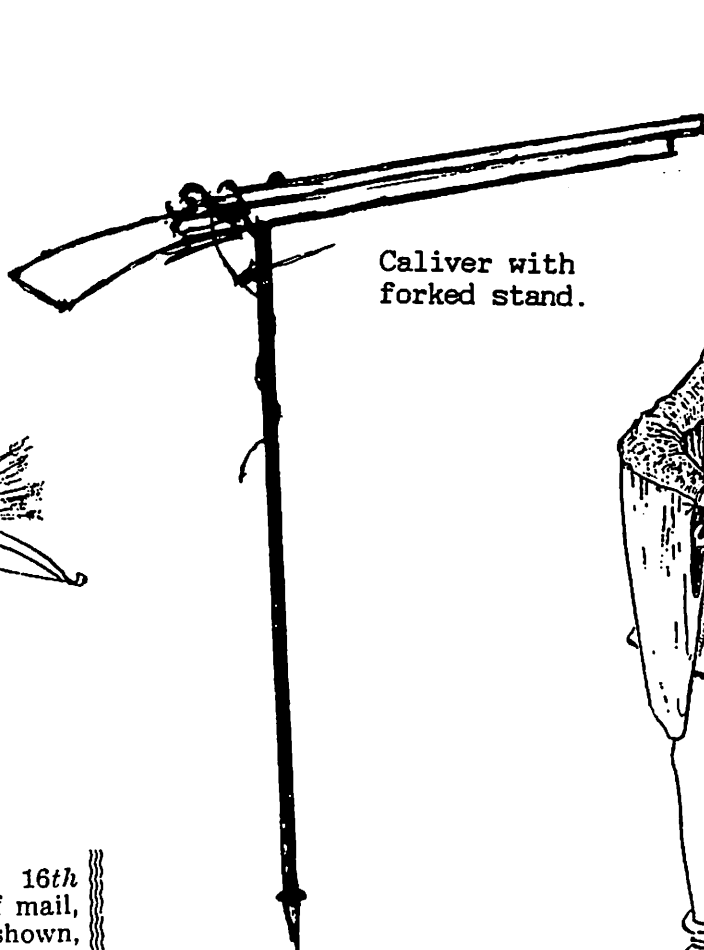
The chief source of supply of firearms was from Scotland and a steady trade was maintained throughout the Nine Years War. While O'Donnell had as the backbone of his army the Gallowglasses of Clann Suibhne (McSweeney), he also had many trained in the use of the caliver, as evidenced by Lughaidh O'Clery's description of the defence of Ballyshannon Castle, and the Battle of the Curlews. As in such conflicts, arms were obtained wherever available. Some were captured and some were bought. The records state that the crew of the Girona at Killybegs traded calivers for a sheep. In 1598 a Spanish vessel called into Killybegs with a supply of firearms, money and very long spears. O'Clery records both O'Neill and O'Donnell as being very disappointed that Philip II had not sent Tercios as well.

.....
The word 'Gallowglass' is derived from the gaelic 'gall oglaigh' meaning foreign volunteers and was the term used for Scottish mercenaries employed by the Irish between 1250 and 1602. Many settled in Ireland and their surnames are commonplace today, e.g. Sweeney, McDonald, McLean, etc.

Tercios were highly-trained Spanish regiments, feared all over Europe at the time.



An Irish Galloglass: 16th Century. A shirt of mail, and other armour as shown, was worn over a heavy pleated garment and, at times, over a short tunic of lighter material.



Caliver with forked stand.



The Kern, or Irish Light Infantry, of the 16th century

O'Donnell Clan Gathering '92.

The present plans for next year's Gathering are much the same as published in the last issue -

12th June : Assemble and Official Opening in Donegal Town (Castle grounds hopefully) followed by talks, music, exhibitions etc. in Central Hotel.

13th June: Bus Tour to historic sites with night's entertainment to round off the day(venue to be decided).

14th June: A visit to Doon Rock, inauguration site of the O'Donnell Chieftains, with talks and pageantry, followed by Farewell Dinner(venue to be decided).

Her Excelency, Mrs. Mary Robinson (whose mother was an O'Donnell), President of Ireland, has been invited. She replied that it is too early yet to give a definite answer. If, however, she does agree to attend, then it is likely that Friday night's functions will be replaced by a Banquet.

For further information contact Secretary Ben O'Donnell, Lifford, Co. Donegal (office 074-41066, home 074-41419) or Vincent O'Donnell, Inver, Co. Donegal (073-36059).

Donegal Castle is to be the setting for the official signing ceremony in connection with the Twinning of Donegal/Ballyshannon Sene. In view of the historical occasion of the twinning it is very appropriate that the ancient seat of the O'Donnells should be the chosen venue.

and
it
was.

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Red Hugh's Death Remembered.

Below is an exact copy of the commemorative card published on the occasion of the unveiling of a plaque in Simancas Castle commemorating the death of Red Hugh. The bronze plaque, made in Ireland, was mounted inside the main entrance to the Castle. On Tuesday morning of the Irish Week the actual unveiling took place while Irish musicians played Barry Carrol's newly-composed 'Caoine Aoidh Ruaidh' (Red Hugh's Lament) and, of course, 'O'Donnell Abu'. The national radio had someone there to record the event and afterwards interviewed Micheline Kearney Walsh. All was organised and funded by the Irish Dept. of External Affairs. V.O'D.



Castillo-Archivo de Simancas

On the occasion of the Irish Week at Valladolid in Spain, 20th-24th May 1991, a plaque commemorating the death of Aodh Rua Ó Domhnaill, Prince of Tír Chonaill, which occurred on 10th September 1602 at the Royal Castle of Simancas, was unveiled by his descendant Excmo. Sr. D. Leopoldo O'Donnell, Duque de Tetuán, accompanied by his son, D. Hugo O'Donnell, Conde de Lucena, and Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill, the Irish descendant of Aodh Rua.

Ar an 10ú lá de Mheán Fómhair 1602 fuair Aodh Rua ÓDomhnaill, Prionsa Thír Chonaill, bás sa Chaisleán seo i Simancas agus é ar a bhealach go Valladolid le cabhair mhíleata bhreise a lorg ar Rí Pilib III tar éis briseadh chath Chlonn tSáile in Éirinn ar fhórsaí na Spáinne agus na hÉireann ag arm Shasana.

El 10 de Septiembre de 1602 el noble Irlandés, Hugo O'Donnell, Príncipe de Tír Chonaill, murió en este Castillo de Simancas cuando se dirigía a Valladolid para pedir más ayuda militar al Rey Felipe III después de la derrota de las fuerzas españolas e Irlandesas por un ejército inglés en la batalla de Kinsale en Irlanda.

Wording of the commemorative plaque erected at the Castle of Simancas.

"When he came to the town called Simancas, two leagues from Valladolid, the King's Palace, God permitted, and the ill-luck and misfortune, the wretchedness and the curse attending the Island of Eremon and the Irish of fair Fodla too, would have it that O'Donnell should catch his death-sickness and his mortal illness. He was for sixteen days on his bed of sickness. At last he died at the end of that time, the tenth day of September exactly".

(The Life of Hugh Roe O'Donnell, by Lughaldh Ó Cléirigh)

Micheline Kearney Walsh, historical adviser, and Brídín Gilroy and Pilar Salamanca, organizers of the Irish Week at Valladolid, wish to thank the Taoiseach, Charles J. Haughey, TD, and his Department for their assistance in the production of the O'Donnell commemorative plaque: made of bronze. It was designed by Claran O'Connor and Gerard O'Sullivan, Architects of the Office of Public Works, and cast by Palmer Brothers of Dublin. They also thank Da. Ascensión de la Plaza, Director of the Castillo-Archivo de Simancas, for her kind co-operation.